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Photograph by Harrison Howell Walker

EIRE IS IN A DILEMMA, CAUGHT BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

County Galway, on Eire's western coast, has a share of the Irish coastline on the Atlantic where England has tried to obtain bases for more convenient participation in naval warfare. The deep indentation of Galway Bay, with the Aran Islands lined across its mouth, is regularly visited by transatlantic liners. Much of Galway, oversupplied with rain from cool Atlantic winds, is dotted with peat bogs, where slabs of peat are hauled away in donkey panniers to be burned instead of wood or coal on Irish hearths all over Eire. The dangers of shipping coal, which Eire normally obtains from England, form another complicating factor in the dilemma of whether Irish bases should be granted to the British (Bulletin No. 5).

HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

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Minute Visits to the Midlands

Where Are England's Industrial Midlands?

SINCE German bombers extended their attack to the Midlands, newspaper readers have searched the maps for that strategic region of mid-England.

The Midlands may be defined as the dozen central counties of England. Little idea of their importance, however, is conveyed by saying simply that they extend from Staffordshire east to Huntingtonshire, from Derbyshire south to Bucks. For the Midlands are bounded on the north by Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest, on the southwest by Shakespeare's Stratford-on-Avon, on the south by ancient Oxford, on the east by Cambridge and the picturesque Fen Country.

The geographic heart of England, the plains of the Midlands lie east of the Severn, north of the Thames, south of the Trent, and west of the heights of East Anglia. The inhabitants form about a tenth of England's population.

Staffordshire is one of the most important industrial counties in England. Its northern section is notable for the cluster of towns known as the Potteries, possibly the most concentrated and busiest ceramics center in the world. South Staffordshire is the site of the Black Country, darkened with the smoke of countless factories. Leicestershire, now known for its industrial city of Leicester, England's "stocking capital," still preserves the moated castle of Kenilworth (illustration, next page).

These great industrial centers have promoted agriculture on the Midlands plains to nourish large city populations, such as Birmingham's. The Vale of Evesham, for instance, is one of England's chief orchard districts. The rural districts of the Midlands are symbolically English—complete with hunting horn and the chase. Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire is famous as the small "world capital" of English fox-hunting. The flat Midlands have profited by the ease of transportation with which cities can exchange their industrial products, and ship their exports to the great western outlet, Liverpool.

Birmingham: City of a Thousand Trades

ONE of the recent objectives of German bombing raids on the Midlands, Birmingham is the center of one of the world's outstanding metal-working regions. With a population exceeding a million, it is England's second largest city.

Surrounded by forests of oak, and good plow and pasture land, Birmingham used the materials at hand to develop early woolen, linen, meat, and leather industries. Old England's two-wheel carts required blacksmiths to shoe the horses, rim the wheels, make chains and parts for harness. Early historians were struck by the vast number of Birmingham's anvils. This simple anvil chorus was the prelude to the city's prosperity.

Rapids in the streams, which prevented navigation, offered water power for use in Birmingham's early metal work, to operate large bellows and hammers weighing three or four hundred pounds. Nearby coal and iron were cheaply brought to the city after the construction of canals a century and a half ago.

The city became one of England's arsenals and had an enormous output during the first World War. Today the manufacture of firearms is a leading industry. Birmingham's factories also produce pins and needles, nails, steel pens and railway rolling stock, rubber tires and motor cars, electrical machinery and bicycles, glassware and diamond cuttings, buttons and brooches, candy and cutlery, and a great assortment of chemicals.

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Photograph by W. Robert Moore

RICE CULTURE BLANKETS THE PLAINS OF SOUTHERN SIAM IN A PATCHWORK QUILT OF WATER

Rain is good weather in the rice country, where six rainy months bring the floods to irrigate the mirrorlike squares of paddy fields for the leading crop of Thailand (Siam). Canals (right foreground) lead the water into the shallow plots, into which rice seedlings are transplanted by hand. The plots of clear water have not yet received their fuzzy rows of seedlings. The guardian lines of palm trees are tapped for sap, from which a crude palm sugar is made. Thailand is one of the few lands in the Orient where more rice is raised than consumed; the surplus is exported to the rice bowls of China and Japan (Bulletin No. 3).

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France's Lorraine Borderland a Perennial War Hostage

RECENT news that Frenchmen were being deported from Lorraine, now under the influence of German forces of occupation, reads like a repetition of earlier chapters in French history.

Similar melancholy migrations have occurred before in Lorraine, at the outset as well as at the conclusion of wars. For parts of the border province of Lorraine, usually with the adjoining province of Alsace—because of their rich industries and strategic frontier communications—have been spoils of war between France and Germany ever since 1648. The Treaty of Westphalia in that year left France in possession. Victorious Germany took the borderland provinces after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The Treaty of Versailles returned them to France—a frontier strip of 5,606 square miles. Each transfer started a trek of exiles.

One of Richest Iron Ore Beds of Europe at Stake

Moreover, with each transfer of Lorraine goes the rich bed of iron ore presumed to contain almost half the total iron reserves of all Europe. These deposits have allowed France to vie with the United States in world iron ore production.

The historic province of Lorraine has been divided by modern France among the four administrative departments of Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse, Moselle, and Vosges, which have a combined population of nearly two million people living on their total area of 9,150 square miles. The old name, however, dating from King Lothair who inherited this section from his grandfather Charlemagne in 843, is applied sometimes to the entire region, sometimes only to that fraction annexed by Germany in 1870-71 and restored to France in 1918.

The old province, with its historic capital at Nancy, was ruled for centuries by the Dukes of Lorraine and for several decades by a deposed King of Poland before falling to the crown of France. Among the many leaders rising from its boundaries was Joan of Arc (illustration, next page). Metz, now the second-largest city, gave to France the musician Thomas, composer of the popular opera *Mignon,* and dispatched to America in 1776 a young visiting Frenchman named Lafayette.

Also Gives "Salt of the Earth" to France

The strategic Lorraine iron deposits occur in a narrow strip some 70 miles long and less than 30 miles wide, stretched from Longwy in the north to Nancy in the south. The Nancy field was developed by France after the existing French workings had been lost to Germany in 1870. Together they have accounted for as much as three-fourths of France's output of iron and up to 70 per cent of the country's steel. Both iron ore and steel have until the past few years been exported to Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, and The Netherlands.

France's iron and steel industry, fed principally from Lorraine, constituted the country's second most important business, ranking next to the richly specialized textile industry with which France virtually led the world. Local iron, frequently from easily accessible and economical open-quarry mines, was processed in Lorraine's own steel works and blast furnaces, notably at Briey and Nancy, there being made into bars, steel joists, rails, and other supplies for heavy industries and munitions. The chief limitation of the Lorraine steel industry was a shortage of coal and coke, much of which had to be imported from Germany, Belgium, or north France. The coal of Lorraine occurs in fringes of the Saar coal fields.

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Lady Godiva's Coventry Has Written English Industrial History

THE Midlands city of Coventry, which German bombers sought to blast from the map, has more than doubled its population since the turn of the century.

Industrially, Coventry is a symbol of progress. Its bicycle industry dates from a modest beginning in 1868. The first English automobile was made there in 1896, and during the first World War the nation's airplane industry started there.

In its earliest days Coventry's textiles were famous. The phrase, "true as Coventry blue," originated from a dye for which the city was renowned in the 15th century. When the demand for clocks began about 1615, clock-making became established in Coventry.

Upon the invention of the sewing machine, Coventry grasped the opportunity for a new manufacture, as it did successively and successfully with the advent of the gasoline engine, trolley cars, electrical equipment, the telephone, motor cycles, motor cars and buses, airplanes, motion picture projecting machines, and radio. It is the home also of the English rayon industry.

Coventry has a 16-acre factory for the production of wheels alone, varying from the smallest airplane wheels to artillery steel wheels, from clock wheels to cog wheels as tall as a man, and wire wheels which weekly consume hundreds of miles of wire.

One of the city's historical characters was Lady Godiva of the long tresses and famous ride, wife of Leofric, the Lord of Coventry in the 11th century.

Note: Places of historical and current interest in the English Midlands are described in the following issues of the *National Geographic Magazine:* "Within the Halls of Cambridge" (University), September, 1936; "How Warwick (Castle) Was Photographed in Color," July, 1936; "Vagabonding in England," March, 1934; "Beauties of the Severn Valley," April, 1933; and "Oxford (University), Mother of Anglo-Saxon Learning," November, 1929.

Towns and shires of the Midlands are shown on The Society's Pilgrim's Map of the British Isles (50¢ on paper; $1 on linen). On the border of this map are pictured men and places of importance connected with England and the Midlands.

Bulletin No. 1, December 9, 1940.

Photograph from "Topical," © Central Acrophoto Co., Ltd.

BUILT BY A CONQUEROR, DESTROYED BY A DICTATOR, KENILWORTH CASTLE FACES AIR WAR

A veteran of England's changing fortunes now exposed to aerial warfare over the Midlands is eight-centuries-old Kenilworth Castle, familiar to readers of Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth* as the scene of the Earl of Leicester's sumptuous entertainment of Queen Elizabeth. England's last successful invaders, the Normans, started the castle about 1120, with walls 16 feet thick. Cromwell, as England's dictator, had his soldiers dismantle the Norman fortress. The rolling plain, checkered with small fields and woods and clusters of thatched cottages, is characteristic of the rural regions of the Midlands.

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Thailand (Ex-Siam): A Two-Way Buffer State

THAILAND, the Land of the White Elephant and the Gold Pagoda, the last independent kingdom of Asia, has shown symptoms of becoming just one more country of machine guns, border incidents, and international power politics. Continual friction between Thailand and French Indo-China along their 900 miles of common border, with repeated demands that Indo-China surrender its two western provinces to Thailand, has been linked with the larger quarrels of Great Britain, France, and Japan. (Until the official name change in 1939, Thailand figured picturesquely in international affairs as Siam.)

Since the establishment of Japanese bases in French Indo-China, Thailand has been the next-in-line for any further Japanese westward and southward expansion. Thailand's claim against two provinces of Indo-China is a threat against the territory of France's richest colony in Asia. An international airline was started last year between Thailand and Japan.

Siamese Elbow Separates Two British Strongholds

Stretching a long arm of tropical land along the Malay Peninsula, Thailand elbows its southernmost extension into a strategic spot between Britain's stronghold of Singapore to the southeast and British India to the northwest. Thailand's situation would make Siamese hostility, with or without Japanese support, a threat to British supply lines between India and Singapore.

Although the Tokyo press recently has indicated that Japan considers the country to be within the Japanese sphere of influence, Thailand has long had closer trade relations with Great Britain. Nearly 40 per cent of the total Thai trade, both imports and exports, has been with the British; only about 10 per cent of the trade has been with Japan.

Of the exports from Thailand—chiefly rice, rubber, and tin—more than 80 per cent goes to such neighboring British ports as Penang and Singapore, on the Malay Peninsula. Nearly all the tin, for instance, which constitutes more than 20 per cent of the exports, passes through Penang. Less than five per cent of Siamese exports go to Japan. And English products entering Siam are almost double the Japanese goods purchased.

Japanese and British Influences in Striking Modern Trend

In 1932, Siam adopted a constitutional government, although retaining its monarch. This trend toward democracy has been attributed largely to the Western ideas which came from the foreign education of numbers of Siam's youth.

In the past, young men and women of Siam to the number of 150 and more have regularly been students in English universities, in line with the Siamese policy of sending students abroad on government scholarships. Normally, many go also to Japan, to the Philippines, to France, Germany, Canada, and other countries. There are now 84 in the United States.

The former president of the council and commander of the army studied in Germany, where he was a classmate of General Goering. In later years officers were sent to Japan for naval and military training.

The finance minister of Thailand's government has a British adviser, and the country's financial reserves are mostly in British securities. Many of Siam's technical experts and advisers are Americans.

In Bangkok, the colorful capital, live several hundred Japanese merchants. The

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While Lorraine's iron wealth was under the German flag, 1870-1918, it contributed three-fourths of the iron produced in the extensive German empire.

The mineral riches of Lorraine include generous deposits of salt, mainly in the neighborhood of Nancy and Château-Salins, the latter owing its ancient name to the presence of salt. These salt works used to supply France with two-thirds of her saline requirements. The region was highly regarded for its salt even before the arrival of the machine age heightened the value of iron. Modern rôles of Lorraine's salt include its uses in the chemical plants around Nancy. Other industries dotting the Lorraine countryside are cotton spinning and weaving, built up largely by refugees from Alsace after 1870. The province has considerable reaches of grain fields and pasture, and is the northern limit of vine culture in France.

Bulletin No. 2, December 9, 1940.

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A MARBLE JOAN OF ARC LOOKS LONGINGLY AT THE REAL JOAN'S HOME

The village of Domremy-la-Pucelle on the outskirts of Lorraine is renowned through all France as the birthplace of Joan of Arc, "La Pucelle," who delivered 15th century France from English invaders. The humble cottage in which the warrior maiden was born, January 6, 1412, has been considerably altered to suit its present status as a national shrine. King Louis XI ordered a statue of Joan placed in the niche above the door. The large statue in the garden, unveiled in 1901, represents the young girl taking a last look at her home before responding to the call of France.

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Greece and Italy, Now First-Time Modern Foes

GREECE and Italy, locked now in conflict, look back beyond a friendly recent past to old hostilities. These two Mediterranean peninsulas—geographically close, parallel, and similar—were inevitably opponents in the ring of history.

Venturesome ancient Greek merchantmen, after 735 B. C., found Sicily (illustration, next page) and the lower end of Italy's boot ripe for conquest. Hellenic invaders built mighty cities there—Syracuse, Segesta, Agrigentum, Tarentum (now Taranto) and Paestum—some of whose Greek temples, theaters, and city walls still stand.

Greece Held Sway in Southern Italy

Expanding Rome at first was willing to consider southern Italy to be Greek territory. But early in the 3rd century B. C. the Greeks of Tarentum destroyed a Roman fleet which defied treaty obligations. Rome attacked, and Tarentum called in Pyrrhus of Epirus, who won two battles, but with so many casualties that he exclaimed, "Another such victory and we are lost" (a "Pyrrhic victory"). Pyrrhus was defeated in his next engagement, and Rome then extended its control over all of southern Italy.

The last independent Greeks, the Achaean League, were defeated by the Roman General Mummius in 146 B. C. All of Greece then became a Roman province.

During the first Mithridatic War against Rome, many of Greece's cities unfortunately backed Mithridates, the ambitious king of Pontus (now in Turkey). After the Roman general, Sulla, defeated Mithridates' forces, he punished the disloyal Greeks with confiscations and fines. Central Greece lay in ruins.

When Caesar and Pompey fought, many of the latter's finest ships were Greek. Greece was the battleground for this decisive campaign, which was climaxed by the battle of Pharsalus, when Caesar won all Greece.

Greeks Kept Backing "Wrong Horse"

Misfortune again struck Greece in the person of Mark Antony, who laid heavy taxes on the people to pay for his wars against Octavian. Again Greece was backing the loser; Octavian was victorious at the naval battle of Actium (31 B. C.). Colonists from Italy were sent to help restore a Greece depopulated by wars and theatened with famine.

Under the Roman Empire, the down-trodden Greeks were cheered only by the respect which Roman leaders paid to Hellenic culture. Athens' university maintained its high reputation. Greek teachers poured into Italy, while Roman travelers went to Greece to visit its health resorts and admire its abundant works of art. Emperors Nero and Hadrian visited Greece, gave much freedom to the country, but snatched away many priceless art collections.

When the capital of the Roman Empire was removed from Rome to Constantinople in 330 A. D., Greece suffered as a center of culture, but her trade improved with the eastward shift of shipping routes.

From post-Roman times down to the last century, there was no unified Italy. Greece was at first subject to the Byzantine Empire. The Crusades stimulated commerce and helped build up the might of the Italian cities, especially Venice. The Venetians encroached more and more on Greece's Aegean trade. After the fall of Constantinople and the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire (1204), Greece was divided among Frankish barons, Venetians (who maintained commercial sta-

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nation has some 2,500,000 Chinese. Many of the latter operate bakeries, tailor shops, butcher shops, and hardware, jewelry, and general stores. They make up the bulk of the middle class of Thailand.

Thailand is shaped somewhat like an elephant's head, with ears raised, Bangkok the capital in the mouth, and the trunk extending somewhat irregularly down along the Malay Peninsula. Its area of 200,000 square miles is almost twice that of Colorado, and its population is nearly 15,000,000.

The northern part of the country is well forested. The teak wood industry is mainly in British hands, producing $2,000,000 worth of timber a year.

The Siamese are more than 80 per cent farmers, and the new government has carried out extensive irrigation works, established fish hatcheries, and is conducting experimental work in hemp, fruit, tobacco, rice and cotton cultivation.

Almost a million acres are in rice (illustration, inside cover), with smaller areas in rubber, coconuts, tobacco, cotton, and pepper. Plantations in southern Siam export about $10,000,000 in rubber annually.

Power is supplied on most farms by more than a million bullocks and water buffaloes. In the teak forests to the north, elephants drag the logs to the river. A recent census showed more than 10,000 elephants.

Note: These articles in the *National Geographic Magazine* contain material on Thailand: " 'Land of the Free' in Asia," May, 1934; and "Warfare of the Jungle Folk," February, 1928.

See also these GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS: "New Airline for Thailand, Old Siam," December 18, 1939; and "Bangkok, Siam's Capital, Awaits a New Monarch," March 25, 1935.

Siam's strategic location in Asia, between Indo-China and the Malay Peninsula, is shown on The Society's Map of Asia and also on the Map of the Pacific Ocean. Each of these maps may be ordered for 50c on paper and 75c on linen.

Bulletin No. 3, December 9, 1940.

Photograph by W. Robert Moore

THE ZEBU "CABRIOLET" OUTDISTANCED ALL COMPETITION EXCEPT RAILWAYS

On the northeastern plateau of Thailand, just 15 degrees north of the Equator, the native two-wheeled cart was monarch of the trail until the recent development of railroads in that region. No other vehicle could survive the ruts and mire of this tropical land with six months of summer rain. For protection from both rain and sun, the humble cart early developed a projecting "bonnet" of more streamlined contours than the hoods of fashionable cabriolets used before the motor age in western cities. The hump-backed zebu cattle are familiar beasts of burden of northern Siam, whether harnessed with crude wooden yokes to the carts or driven caravan-style to market with pairs of baskets hung over their humps.

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Irish Bases for Britain an Old Question

ENGLAND'S plea for bases on the coast of Eire, recently redoubled in view of heightened naval warfare in the Atlantic, has been consistently resisted.

Such bases would bring British forces some 250 miles nearer to the Atlantic than the westernmost coast of England is. They would establish British control over both sides of the Atlantic, in all latitudes between Norway and France. Eire, however, would have to sacrifice its neutrality in exchange for any protection gained from British use of the bases.

Bases Recall Blarney Stone and Lusitania Victims

Northern Ireland, whose six counties form the northeastern fifth of the island which it shares with Eire, is still British territory and is already belligerent. But this region is cut off from the Atlantic by the northward extension of Eire, and has no coast at all on the west where bases are desired.

It was less than two years ago that England relinquished her last bases in Eire. As a final token of Eire's independence of England, by a treaty signed on April 25, 1938, the British withdrew their garrisons from the strategic posts of Cobh in the south, Berehaven in the west, and Lough Swilly in the north.

Cobh, formerly Queenstown, stands on Eire's southeastern coast due west of Wales, in the spacious Cork harbor which could contain the entire British Navy. The second busiest port in Eire, it has been known to commerce as the port for Cork, some thirteen miles north, and to tradition as the port of entry to Blarney Castle where world travelers pause to kiss the Blarney Stone. One of the greatest disasters of the World War brought to Cobh for burial the bodies of many Americans who died in the *Lusitania* disaster. Cobh, as a convenient halfway station between western England and the open Atlantic, was made the site of a naval dockyard and strongly garrisoned until 1938.

"Two Irelands" in One Island Make Sharp Contrast

Of the five small peninsulas which fray out into the Atlantic from southwestern Eire, the former British base of Berehaven dominates the middle one. It consists of an excellent harbor between Bere Island in Bantry Bay and the mainland. When Britain's Channel Squadron entered the Berehaven roadstead, the chief navigational landmark used was the turreted outline of Dunboy Castle on the mainland, stormed by the British in 1602. The nearest town, Castletownbere, except when enlivened by naval maneuvers, is a leisurely little center for the Barony of Bere, in County Cork, visited by archeologists in search of the mysterious Ogham stones—ancient memorials of uncertain origin, notched and inscribed in queer Ogham writing usually with the names of some prehistoric Irishmen.

The northern base which Britain formerly maintained in Eire stood on the spacious inlet of Lough Swilly, the largest arm of the sea on the north coast of the island, which penetrates for 26 miles into County Donegal and furnishes sheltered anchorage during North Atlantic storms for the coasting vessels serving ports of Eire, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. The next bay to the east, Lough Foyle, is the entrance to Londonderry and Northern Ireland.

Control of these erstwhile British bases passed by treaty to the sovereign independent country of Eire, associated with the British Commonwealth of Nations as a Dominion, but supreme in the management of local affairs in its own four-fifths of the Irish island. This independence sprang from the Republican insurrec-

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tions on the coasts), and various Italian adventurers who settled mainly in the Cyclades. Out of the east, however, surged the Turks and by 1460 they held all of Greece.

Greece under the Turks was the scene of bitter wars between Venice and the Ottoman Empire in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, with Greek ships and sailors by the hundreds impressed into the service of the Turks. By 1566, the Turks had conquered all the Aegean regions except the island of Tenos. Venice retained her strong position in Crete until 1669. Late in the 17th century Venice attacked southern Greece (the Peloponnesus) and captured almost the whole peninsula. But the Ottomans attacked in 1715 and made it again a Turkish dependency.

In 1912, Italy occupied the Greek-populated Dodecanese Islands, which she has held ever since.

Note: For material on Greece and Italy, see the March, 1940, issue of the *National Geographic Magazine,* which contains, in addition to articles and 47 natural color pictures on the two countries, a map supplement entitled, "Classic Lands of the Mediterranean."

See also "Imperial Rome Reborn," in the March, 1937, issue of the *Geographic,* and "New Greece, the Centenarian, Forges Ahead," in the December, 1930, number.

Bulletin No. 4, December 9, 1940.

Photograph by Melville Chater

GRECIAN COLUMNS AND ROMAN BRICKS MAKE HISTORY VISIBLE IN SICILY

Just two miles from Italy, Sicily was nevertheless held by the Greeks for 500 years before Roman influence triumphed there. The first Greek colony on the island, established in 735 B. C., on the east coast, was Tauromenium, the modern Taormina (right of center). During Tauromenium's 332 years of being a proud Greek colony, the ample outdoor theater on the mountainside offered the colonials a taste of their homeland's drama, in a structure 357 feet in diameter. Already ancient in Roman times, the theater was to some extent "restored" by Roman architects using massive walls of brick. Under the snow-capped volcanic peak of Mount Etna (10,741 feet high, left background) Greek mythology placed the home of the one-eyed giants, the Cyclopes, into whose realm Ulysses adventured.

tion of April, 1916, and the five years of subsequent warfare which restored the rule of Ireland to Irishmen for the first time since King Henry II invaded the island from England in 1172.

The two important air bases of Ireland are both in Eire: one is located near Dublin, the other at Foynes, on the River Shannon.

Sharp temperamental differences distinguish predominantly Catholic Eire from predominantly Protestant Northern Ireland, with its strong English and Scottish elements. Geographically, however, the two sections have many defense problems in common. Largely plain, surrounded by an irregular rim of low, rounded mountains, they offer few natural barriers to invasion.

The chief centers of population and commerce, both in Eire and Northern Ireland, are along the east coast, facing Great Britain—Belfast, capital of Northern Ireland, with a population of more than 400,000 people, and Dublin, Eire's capital and leading port.

Note: The following articles in the *National Geographic Magazine* contain additional illustrated material on Eire: "Old Ireland, Mother of New Eire," May, 1940; and "Ireland: The Rock Whence I Was Hewn," by Donn Byrne, March, 1927.

The sites of bases which England once held in Eire and which she wishes to regain are to be found on The Society's Map of the Atlantic Ocean. Additional places of interest in Eire (formerly the Irish Free State) are shown on the Map of Europe and the Near East, and in greater detail on the Pilgrim's Map of the British Isles.

Bulletin No. 5, December 9, 1940.

Photograph by Harrison Howell Walker

THE BLASKET ISLANDS' BASKET BOATS NAVIGATE THE ATLANTIC OFF EIRE

Typical of the many island outposts which, lying off the western coast of Eire in the Atlantic, might serve as naval bases are the Blasket Islands, notable as the most westerly inhabited fragments of Europe (barring Iceland). They were the stronghold of the last Irish chieftain to surrender to the English. Their only link with the mainland, ordinarily, is the light, sturdy curragh, the ancient style of boat without a keel, made of tarred canvas stretched over a wicker or wooden framework, and propelled by several pairs of bladeless oars (leaning against the cliff, left background). The Blasket Islanders moor their curraghs, for protection, upside down, lashed to posts on the rocky shore.

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